



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

News Release

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ICE wins legal victory in fight to deport bartender linked to slaying of two British soldiers

LOS ANGELES – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) scored an important legal victory yesterday in its effort to deport an Orange County man convicted for his role in the slaying of two British soldiers in Northern Ireland nearly 20 years ago.

The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) ruled yesterday that Sean O’Cealleagh, often referred to in the media as the singing Irish bartender, could be removed from the United States for his crime. O’Cealleagh, 37, was charged with aiding in the 1988 murder of two British Army corporals who were pulled from their vehicle and shot after they attempted to drive around a funeral procession for a member of the Irish Republican Army. O’Cealleagh, pronounced O’Kelly, received a life prison sentence for his role in the murders, but was freed after eight years under the Good Friday accords.

At O’Cealleagh’s immigration hearing, ICE attorneys introduced a video showing the angry mob surrounding the soldiers’ vehicle, pulling the young men out of the car, and dragging them to a park, where they were shot. O’Cealleagh and two other men were ultimately convicted of aiding and abetting in the murders.

In its decision, the BIA overruled a local immigration judge’s finding that O’Cealleagh’s crime was a “purely political offense” and not grounds for removal under immigration law. The “political offense” exception was designed to ensure that aliens could not be deported for convictions on trumped-up or politically motivated charges. In its ruling, the BIA found that while O’Cealleagh’s offense took place in a “political milieu,” anger and revenge were the primary motives for the crime and the charges were not fabricated. The BIA remanded O’Cealleagh’s case back to the local immigration court for another hearing.

“This is an important legal victory for ICE,” said John Salter, Chief Counsel for ICE in Los Angeles. “ICE is working closely with its law enforcement counterparts both here and abroad to ensure that the United States will not be a refuge for those convicted of crimes in other countries.”

O’Cealleagh was arrested by U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at Los Angeles International Airport in February 2004 after he returned from a visit to Northern Ireland. O’Cealleagh, who was initially detained by ICE, was released from federal custody in May 2004 on a \$15,000 bond pending the outcome of ICE’s appeal.

ICE